

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 SANA 02993 01 OF 03 210557Z
ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY SANA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5102
INFO AMEMBASSY JIDDA

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 3 SANA 2993

EXDIS

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (TEXT PARA 1 AND 4)

DEPT. PLEASE PASS TO CHUSMHV DHAHRAN, USMTM RIYADH AND
USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GERMANY

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, PINT, ZP, YE, SA
SUBJ: YEMEN'S DILEMMAS OF CHOICE

BEGIN SUMMARY: YAR PRESIDENT GHASHMI SEES YEMEN AT
CROSSROADS WHERE IT MUST CHOOSE BETWEEN ACCOMMODATION
OF SOVIETS AND RESISTANCE TO THEM. BUT HE IS LOATH TO
OPPOSE SOVIETS WHEN HE HAS NO CONFIDENCE IN AMERICAN
SUPPORT. END SUMMARY.

1. PRESIDENT GHASHMI RECEIVED ME ON 19 JUNE AND AT ONCE,
EVEN BEFORE TELEVISION CAMERAMEN DEPARTED FROM SCENE AND
GHASHMI WAS STILL WREATHED IN RITUAL SMILES, HE LEANED
FORWARD AND SAID "THE RUSSIANS ARE DIRTY BASTARDS BUT THE
AMERICANS DON'T DO ANYTHING."

2. WITH THE CAMERAMEN GONE, GHASHMI POINTED TO A
MODEL OF SAM MISSILE ON HIS DESK AND SAID THAT RECENT
SOVIET MILITARY DELEGATION HAD TOLD EACH ECHELON

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OF MILITARY COMMAND IT WAS PREPARED TO PROVIDE COMPLETELY
NEW EQUIPMENT OF THE MOST MODERN SORT BUT THAT SUPPLY
WOULD REQUIRE SIGNATURE FROM THE HEADQUARTERS. HE
WAS SMILING AND TEASING IN MANNER; I TRIED GO
OVER FROM DEFENSE TO OFFENSE JUST AS NICELY.

3. I ASKED GHASHMI IF HE DIDN'T RESENT RUSSIAN EFFORTS OF

THIS SORT TO UNDERCUT HIM. GHASHMI SAID OF COURSE HE DID BUT HE DID NOT KNOW WHERE ELSE TO TURN FOR HELP. STRESSING EVERY WORD, HE SAID "I WANT TO GET RID OF THE RUSSIANS BUT I CAN'T DO SO UNLESS I HAVE AN ALTERNATIVE."

4. I RECOUNTED BRIEFLY STEPS WE HAD RECENTLY TAKEN TO RESPOND TO SAUDI REQUESTS FOR TRAINING AND EQUIPMENT TRANSFER I REMINDED HIM SCOPE AND VARIETY OF EQUIPMENT ON WAY AND ASKED GHASHMI IF HE DIDN'T THINK SAUDI SUPPORT WAS INCREASING. HE WAS NONCOMMITAL. I THEN SAID THAT MOST IMPORTANT STEP YEMENIS COULD TAKE DID NOT REQUIRE OUTSIDE HELP EITHER FROM SAUDIS OR FROM SOVIETS BUT COULD BE CARRIED OUT BY YEMENIS THEMSELVES. THIS WAS REORGANIZATION OF UNITS AND GOOD TRAINING PROGRAM. I SAID NEW SUPPLIES OF EQUIPMENT WOULD QUICKLY FALL APART UNLESS THIS WAS DONE. ARMY WOULD BE WEAKER RATHER THAN STRONGER. HE NODDED AND SAID ARMY WAS RTP WAS WEAKER NOW THAN IN PAST. HE DID NOT ELABORATE.

5. INSTEAD HE WENT BACK ON ATTACK, SAYING THAT HE HAD REQUESTED US TO PROVIDE CONVERSION TRAINING FOR 20 MIG PILOTS SO THAT THEY COULD PHASE INTO F-5. WHAT WAS OUR RESPONSE? I SAID WE HAD SAME REQUEST FROM SAUDIS AND HAD RESPONDED WITH PLAN TO PROVIDE THIS TRAINING. HE SAID "BUT WHAT IS YOUR RESPONSE TO ME?" I SAID WE SAW PROGRAM OF MILITARY ASSISTANCE AS TRILATERAL RATHER THAN BILATERAL AND THOUGHT
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ONE OF ITS MOST IMPORTANT ASPECTS WAS COORDINATION BETWEEN SAUDIS, YEMENIS AND UNITED STATES. HOWEVER, WE WILL PROVIDE REQUESTED TRAINING. GHASHMI, STILL SMILING, SHRUGGED BROADLY AND RETURNED TO THE ATTACK.

6. "IF YOU HAVE GOOD RELATIONS WITH THE SAUDIS" --- HE PAUSED AND I NODDED TO INDICATE THAT OUR RELATIONS WERE EXCELLENT --- "THEN YOU SHOULD GET THEM TO HELP US MORE." I ASKED WHAT HE WANTED. "HAVE THEY ASKED YOU TO SELL US AIR-PLANES?" I SAID THEY HAD NOT. AT THIS HE SEEMED STARTLED AND ASKED THE QUESTION AGAIN. I SAID THERE HAD BEEN TALKS TO SUGGEST THAT THEY WOULD ASK US, BUT NO FORMAL REQUEST HAD BEEN MADE. "WHAT ABOUT TANKS?" HE ASKED. I SAID THEY HAVE NEVER DISCUSSED TANKS WITH US, BUT WENT ON TO POINT OUT THAT \$150 MILLION PROGRAM CONTINUED TO BE DELIVERED AT RATE OF 2 OR 3 SHIPS A MONTH IN HODEIDAH. THIS EQUIPMENT, I SAID, WOULD PROVIDE FOR COMPLETE MODERNIZATION OF EQUIPMENT OF 6 YEMENI BRIGADES. IT DID NOT INCLUDE TANKS, BUT IT INCLUDED ANTI-AIR DEFENSE, ARTILLERY, ANTI-TANK DEFENSE AND VITAL MEANS OF MOBILITY. I SAID PROBLEMS OF ABSORBING THIS EQUIPMENT WOULD BE CONSIDERABLE AND RETURNED TO QUESTION OF TRAINING SAYING THAT 50 PERCENT

FAILURE RATE OF YEMENI OFFICERS IN US ENGLISH LANGUAGE SCHOOL WAS HIGHER THAN FAILURE RATE OF SAUDI ENLISTED MEN. I SAID THAT WAS "SCARCELY BELIEVABLE" AND WE WANTED TO BUILD AN ENGLISH LANGUAGE SCHOOL HERE TO EASE THE TRANSITION OF YEMENI STUDENTS TO INSTRUCTION IN THE UNITED STATES.

NOTE BY OC/T: NOT PASSED ABOVE ADDRESSEES.

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ACTION SS-25

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S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 3 SANA 2993

EXDIS

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (TEXT PARA 12 LINE 1)

7. "THE SCHOOL," SAID GHASHMI, "IS A LONG WAYS OFF." CLEARLY STUNG BY THE COMPARISON BETWEEN YEMENI AND SAUDI STUDENTS, HE INSISTED THAT THE SOVIETS WERE ABLE TO TRAIN YEMENIS IN RUSSIAN WITHOUT NEARLY AS MUCH DIFFICULTY AS WE HAD TRAINING YEMENIS IN ENGLISH. I SAID THAT MAYBE THAT WAS BECAUSE SOVIETS DID'T MAINTAIN HIGH STANDARDS OF ACHIEVEMENT WHEN THEIR CHIEF CONCERN WAS FRIENDS IN YEMEN, ESPECIALLY IN THE OFFICER CORPS. GHASHMI SMILED AGAIN AND NODDED AND SAID THAT HE INTENDED TO MAK EVERY EFFORT TO CHOOSE THE BEST OFFICERS POSSIBLE TO GO TO THE UNITED STATES FOR TRAINING.

8. HE THEN SAID THAT IN THE SHORT RUN HE WANTED TO SEND 8 OR 9 OFFICERS ON A TOUR OF THE UNITED STATES. HE MENTIONED MOHAMMED DYFULLAH, COMMANDER OF THE AIR FORCE, ALI ABDULLAH SALAH, COMMANDER OF THE MUQD BRIGADE IN TAIZ AND ABDO RAHMAN SAID, MILITARY COMMANDER OF HODEIDAH, AND SOME OTHERS. "THEY NEED TO SPEND SEVERAL WEEKS" IN THE UNITED STATES TO "OPEN THEIR EYES."

WITHOUT MENTIONING CONTRADICTORY SAUDI APPROACHES ABOUT
MOHAMMED DYFULLAH, I TOLD GHASHMI WE HAD ALREADY
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REQUESTED TOUR FOR HIS AIR FORCE COMMANDER AND I HOPED
IT WOULD BE POSSIBLE TO GIVE HIM SOME MORE DETAILS
SOON. HE ASKED ME IF I AGREED WITH THE TOUR. I SAID
IT WAS A GOOD IDEA, BUT THE DECISION ON FUNDING WAS IN
THE HANDS OF THE AUTHORITIES IN WASHINGTON. I WOULD,
HOWEVER, BE IN TOUCH WITH HIM AS SOON AS I HAD AN
ANSWER.

9. AT THIS POINT, I PULLED OUT A COPY OF STATE 153167
AND SAID THAT I WANTED TO TRANSLATE FOR HIM SOME OF ITS
SECTIONS SINCE IT WAS AN "OFFICIAL MESSAGE" TO THE HEADS
OF GOVERNMENT IN THE PENINSULA. HE ASKED IF IT WAS FROM
CARTER AND I SAID IT WAS FROM STATE DEPARTMENT
IN WASHINGTON, BUT IT CLEARLY REPRESENTED ADMINISTRATION
POLICY. GHASHMI NODDED AND I TRANSLATED FOR HIM PARA 2
DOWN TO THE SUBPARAGRAPH WHICH BEGINS TO DEAL WITH THE
PROBLEM IN AFGHANISTAN. I STRESSED THE NEED FOR CLOSE
CONSULTATIONS, PARTICULARLY IN THE CASE OF YEMEN WHICH
FACES A THREAT FROM THE SOUTH AND ASKED HIM WHAT THE
SITUATION WAS IN THE SOUTHERN PART OF THE YAR.

10. HE SAID THAT THE WEEK BEFORE, YEMENI FORCES IN THE DAMT
AREA HAD KILLED 170 OF THE MEN TRAINED BY SOUTH YEMEN AND
RECENTLY REINTRODUCED INTO THEIR NATIVE COUNTRY TO
OPPOSE THE YAR GOVERNMENT. HE INSISTED THAT THE GOVERN-
MENT FORCES HAD TAKEN NO CASUALTIES. HE HAD USED THE
SO-CALLED RESERVE FORCES-A REGULAR ARMY UNIT, THE
ARMORED FORCES AND THE BRIGADE CALLED THE GIANTS. I
ASKED IF HE THOUGHT THIS WOULD PUT AN END TO THE
FIGHTING AND HE SHOOK HIS HEAD GRIMLY. "NO, THE TENSION
IS GOING TO INCREASE," HE SAID AND THE PROBLEMS WILL
GROW WORSE. HE SAID THE RUSSIANS WERE HELPING THE
TRAINING OF THESE ANTI-NORTHERN FORCES AND, IN FACT, WERE
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PAYING FOR AN INCREASE IN THE PDRY ARMY OF SOME 20,000
MEN, MANY OF THEM ORGINALLY NORTHERNS. I ASKED HIM
IF THE RUSSIANS WERE ALSO WORKING AGAINST HIM INSIDE
OF YEMEN AND HE NODDED.

11. I THEN SAID THAT YEMEN MIGHT BE AT A CROSSROADS
WHERE IT HAD TO DECIDE WHETHER ITS BEST INTERESTS LAY IN

ACCOMMODATING THE SOVIETS OR IN RESISTING THEM. SUDDENLY GHASHMI TURNED SERIOUS, ABANDONING THE POSE OF LAUGHTER AND MOCK ATTACKS THAT HE HAD EMPLOYED SO FAR IN THE CONVERSATION. HE THOUGHT FOR A MINUTE, THEN NODDED AND SAID "IF WE THROW OUT THE RUSSIANS AND BREAK WITH THEM, WILL YOU BE WITH US?"

12. I SAID WE WERE "WITH HIM" BUT MOST IMPORTANT DEFENSE WE HAD AGAINST THE UNLOVED RUSSIANS AND SOUTH YEMENIS WAS THE CLOSE COORDINATION AND SOLIDARITY BETWEEN FRIENDLY STATES ON THE PENINSULA AND THEREFORE THE FIRST STEP WAS CONSULTATIONS TO DEVISE A STRATEGY WHICH WOULD ALLOW US TO CHECK SOVIET AMBITIONS IN THIS AREA. I SAID IT WAS ALL TOO EASY FOR FRIENDS OF YEMEN TO BE CONFUSED BY ITS POLICY OF "BALANCE," WHEN SOVIETS SHIPMENTS OF ARMS TO YEMEN CONTINUE AND IMPORTANT MILITARY DELEGATIONS ARE RECEIVED FROM MOSCOW WITH GREAT PUBLICITY AND WARMTH. THIS CREATED QUESTIONS IN THE MINDS OF FRIEND WHO ALREADY WERE SUSPICIOUS OF THE ACTIVITIES OF 150-MAN SOVIET MILITARY MISSION IN THE COUNTRY. IT WAS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT TO HAVE A CLEAR POLICY. THE THREATS TO YEMEN WERE CLEAR. WHAT WAS YEMEN'S STRATEGY IN DEALING WITH THESE THREATS? I SAID THE GOVERNMENT OF YEMEN SHOULD MAKE UP ITS MIND ABOUT HOW TO PROCEED AND THEN LET US KNOW. WE WERE VERY INTERESTED. I THEN REMINDED HIM OF THE STATEMENT THAT THE USG WAS "VIGILANT TO NEED TO RESPOND APPROPRIATELY AND FIRMLY TO SOVIET STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS WHICH SEEK TO ALTER GLOBAL BALANCE AND DESTABILIZE POLITICAL SECURITY SITUATION IN AFRICA AND ELSE-
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S E C R E T SECTION 3 OF 3 SANA 2993

EXDIS

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (TEXT PARA 13)

13. GHASHMI THEN BEGAN ASKING ABOUT SAID BARRE AND SADAT. WHAT HAD WE DONE TO SUPPORT THEM? HE CLEARLY SAW THEM AS LEADERS WHO HAD THROWN IN THEIR LOT WITH THE UNITED STATES BUT THEN HAD NOT RPT NOT RECEIVED ADEQUATE SUPPORT IN RETURN. I SAID IN REPLY THAT OUR COMMITMENTS TO PEACE SETTLEMENT WAS SOLID AND I POINTED TO US QUESTIONS WHICH ISRAELI CABINET WAS THRASHING OUT AND SAID I EXPECTED US TO PLAY FURTHER ROLE AS INTERMEDIARY ON ANY SENSITIVE QUESTIONS. PROGRESS COULD NOT OCCUR OVERNIGHT. AS FOR SOMALIA, THAT WAS COUNTRY WHICH HAD INVADDED ITS NEIGHBOR. COUNTRIES WITH THREAT OF INVASION OR SUBVERSION FROM NEIGHBORS, LIKE YEMEN, WERE IN DIFFERENT SITUATION. WE HAD NEVER MADE PROMISE OF SUPPORT TO SAID. WHEN WE DID MAKE PROMISES, HOWEVER, WE KEPT THEM.

COMMENT: CONVERSATION LASTED ABOUT 45 MINUTES. HIS QUESTIONS WERE SHARP, HIS MANNER WARM. I COUNTER-PUNCHED, SMILING. THROUGHOUT, WHETHER MOOD WAS ARGUMENTATIVE BANTER OR SERIOUS, IT WAS CLEAR GHASHMI WAS LOOKING FOR HELP. HE DOES NOT FEEL HE CAN DEPEND UPON SUPPORT FROM US OR SAUDIS IN ESCALATING CONFLICT WITH SOUTH YEMENIS AND
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SOVIETS. HE WANTS TWO THINGS OF US -- A DIRECT RELATIONSHIP IN MILITARY SUPPLY AND US INFLUENCE ON THE SAUDIS TO RATIONALIZE MILITARY AND CIVILIAN ASSISTANCE HERE. ALL I CONVEYED, OF COURSE, WAS GOOD WILL AND SERIOUS CONCERN. I DON'T THINK ANYTHING I SAID CHANGED HIS VIEW, SPOKEN WITH SOLDIERLY BLUNTNESS, THAT THE RUSSIANS ARE "BASTARDS" BUT AMERICANS NOT LIKELY TO DO ANYTHING. NEVERTHELESS, HE ALSO SUGGESTED WE MEET AGAIN SOON, "WITHIN NEXT TWO WEEKS," TO TALK FURTHER ABOUT YEMEN'S DILEMMAS OF CHOICE.
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